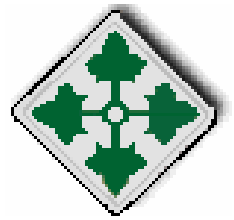




DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 8th Infantry
4th Infantry Division (Mechanized)
Forward Operating Base Kalsu, North Babil, Iraq



8 Jan 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Sgt Matthew Miles. I am a sergeant in the United States Army and am currently deployed in Iraq as a mortarman in HHC 2-8 IN (M) 4ID. This is not my first deployment here as I was part of the 4ID main push in 2003. Doing this is why I joined the army. I was a senior in college when September 11th happened. I was on the honors list and the Dean's list at the University of Memphis. When that attack occurred I felt compelled to do my part in fighting those forces which sought to do our people harm. Like so many generations that answered the nation's call in time of need before this one, I felt that this was my generation's moment to stand up and carry on our country's proud tradition of selfless service. I could not live with myself later on in life knowing that our country was attacked and I had neither the resolve nor the fortitude to do my part. I did not join with the intention of making this a career, but simply to be a true American and defend that which I love and hold so dear. I would not have to say later in life that our soldiers fought bravely and died with honor, when I myself had been content with them going in my stead.

As a result of my decision I have been filled with a sense of pride that only those men of the great generations before me have known. One memory that sticks with me is when I returned from my last deployment to the sight and sound of hundreds of veterans of previous wars cheering us on at the airport terminal. I felt humbled in the presence of veterans of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam and the fact that they showed up to honor us was a true testament to the gravity of what we had done. Between the thanks of so many strangers, and the overwhelming pride all those who know me express daily, the sacrifice I have made is more than compensated. I miss my family, my girlfriend, and my friends; however their security, happiness and way of life are the very reasons I have done what I have. They live the way Americans ought to, free from fear, and my living here for a few years is worth it.

Living here is not as bad a sit could be, I can say that the accommodations this time are far better than the last time I was here. I am presently at FOB Kalsu. I live in a temperature controlled unit with a bed and a wall locker and only one roommate; whereas last time I was here I slept in a ravaged Iraqi building in a room with seven other guys and no air conditioning and heat. The last time I was in Iraq I slept on my vehicle, the dirt, and generally any area I could find. We received workout equipment many months into the deployment and regular food and water was infrequent at best. This time around we have a wonderful dining facility, a coffee shop, a gym, two internet and phone cafés, a barber shop, a shopping area, a basketball court, laundry service, and a post office. The quality of life has vastly improved since my last deployment. Another improvement is the security. During my last tour we had to establish our forward operating base and build its security from the ground up. Today I live in a place where a bunker is on every corner, the living quarters, dining hall, latrines, showers, internet, etc. are all surrounded by cement walls. The security is wonderful and relieves some of the stress and nervousness that I experienced last time.

As I close this letter I feel it important to stress how wonderful the men are that I serve with. The type of person it takes to willingly give up their freedoms and sacrifice all so that others may enjoy theirs' is truly a rare breed and one to be respected and honored. So say a prayer for the heroes of our generation, and wish them a safe and speedy return.

Respectfully,

SGT Matthew Miles